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Chairman: Mr. Galuška ..... (Czech Republic)

Contents

Agenda item 112: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/54/98, A/54/411, A/54/419 and A/54/430)

1. **Mr. Jong Myong Hak** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that to protect and promote the rights of children was to bring up children as independent social beings with sound bodies, a moral sense and intellectual faculties. Individual States must arouse social interest in the protection of children, with a view to enhancing their right to life and to providing them with education and health care. As the most vulnerable members of society, they were entitled to receive preferential treatment. How they were protected and educated would have a decisive influence on the destiny of the planet.

2. The Government had been making unsparing investments in that regard, including paying the full cost of nurseries and kindergartens and providing free medical care and free education. It was also especially important to strengthen the family as the basic cell of society.

3. The role of international organizations in assisting States in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child must be enhanced. Developing countries, which lacked resources, were unable to increase their protection of children. In that regard, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea appreciated the efforts of UNICEF to implement national action programmes for the protection and promotion of the rights of children.

4. Violence against children — including child labour and traffic in children, child prostitution and child pornography — was a serious threat to children's rights. The international community must take measures to redress those problems. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported efforts to finalize, before the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention, the draft optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the draft optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. His delegation suggested that time should be set aside during the current session for the resolution of obstacles to the implementation of the Convention.

5. **Mr. Mutaboba** (Rwanda) said that, although many Governments had ratified the Convention, the rights of children continued to be violated throughout the world. The recent genocide in Rwanda had claimed over a million lives — a gross violation of the right to life — and had had a tragic effect on the lives of Rwandan children. Children believed to be Tutsis had been cruelly killed alongside their parents. Girls had been raped and held as sexual hostages; as a result many had given birth, while others had contracted sexually transmitted diseases. Since Rwanda had a culture of silence, however, many young girls had hesitated to bring charges, despite the fact that rape was a crime under the genocide law. Both adults and children had killed and raped, which explained why minors in Rwanda were being brought to justice for their participation in genocide.

6. The genocide had destroyed the social fabric. As a result of those events and of the repatriation in 1996 and 1997, 87,000 children had become heads of families. The number of orphans and unaccompanied minors had been estimated at between 300,000 and 400,000. Despite the Government's best efforts, their welfare remained uncertain. It had launched a programme to provide free education and vocational training to such children; many, however, were still too traumatized to speak. Trauma counselling services encouraged children to go to school, in the belief that schools helped to heal both students and teachers. Unfortunately, funds were lacking to implement a holistic approach to resolving educational and socio-economic needs.

7. In compliance with the Convention, children below the age of 18 who had been suspected of committing genocide were entrusted to rehabilitation centres, with a view to developing their understanding of the seriousness of their crimes, and to improving their skills. The Government of Rwanda requested the international community to assist it in rehabilitating those children, who represented the future of the country. The Government allocated 5 per cent of its budget to assisting survivors of genocide, particularly children, who were provided with modest shelter and other basic necessities. Studies had been undertaken of the phenomenon of street children; some of them were orphans and unaccompanied minors, while others were sent out by their parents to beg. Government efforts to provide special rehabilitation centres for such children had had little effect. In the view of Rwanda, eliminating poverty was the only solution.

8. Prostitution, a related problem, was practised by young girls from poor families, female heads of families, and orphans. Adults, especially male adults, should be held responsible for that crime. Although the Penal Code provided for terms of imprisonment for persons convicted of prostitution, the law was not enforced, largely owing to the culture of silence.

9. The Ministry of Education was endeavouring to consider the needs of disabled children, but infrastructure

and equipment were expensive. Child soldiers were first rehabilitated in special schools and then reintegrated into communities and given free education. The Ministry of Social Affairs had set up guidelines to ensure that treatment provided for such children complied with international human-rights standards. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child had been translated into the local language and would soon be incorporated into school curricula. Information on the Charter and on children's rights was being disseminated with the assistance of non-governmental organizations and UNICEF. Moreover, the Government was working to sensitize both parents and the private sector about the need to invest in education.

10. The Ministry of Education was endeavouring to integrate a gender perspective into curricula and to redress the problem of gender-based discrimination in education. In addition, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission was designing a programme to inculcate the values of tolerance, peace, reconciliation and respect for human rights in the Rwandan population. They had requested all ministries to incorporate those moral values into their programmes, for the benefit of children.

11. The Government was encouraging all Rwandans to become involved in children's matters, and children's funds had been started in most communities to meet the basic needs of poor and orphan children. Resources were badly needed. One third of Rwanda's national income was devoted to debt servicing; the Rwandan people needed greater assistance from the international community to achieve a better world for future generations.

12. **Ms. Assegid** (Ethiopia) said that the special session of the General Assembly to be held in 2001 should provide the forum in which the international community could reaffirm its commitment to children. A broad range of children's rights were laid down in the Ethiopian Constitution. In Ethiopia, children under 18 years of age were not recruited into the armed forces. In addition, Ethiopian law was fully compatible with article 32 of the Convention, on children's work. The law prohibited the employment of children under 14 years of age, and provided that those between 14 and 18 could work only under strict conditions. In Ethiopia, children's work within the family was not seen as exploitative or detrimental to growth and development but rather as imparting basic family skills and responsibilities.

13. The current social-welfare policy gave top priority to children and provided for community-based approaches and the participation of the whole of society in the implementation of welfare programmes. The health policy currently being implemented emphasized the health needs of families, and especially women and children; major priority areas were reproductive health care, child immunization, infectious-disease treatment, and the control of epidemics and sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, the new education policy provided free primary-school education and aimed to raise the attendance rate, especially for girls. The primary-school enrolment rate for girls had significantly improved. In accordance with article 29 of the Convention, primary education was provided in the various native languages.

14. Several studies had been carried out by the Government and by non-governmental organizations to assess what measures would be needed to avert severe social problems faced by children, including studies of street children and dislocated families and of harmful traditional practices. The Government was doing its utmost to change the social situation in the country; as with other African countries, the goals of the World Summit for Children and the World Summit for Social Development were far from being realized, largely owing to a lack of resources. It therefore requested the international community to abide by its commitment to strengthen technical and financial assistance, especially to the least developed countries, of which Ethiopia was one.

15. **Ms. Ibrahimova** (Azerbaijan) said that improving the situation and rights of children was a priority for her Government. Children's rights were enshrined in the Constitution and laws on labour, employment and marriage and the family, and in the Criminal and Civil Codes. Azerbaijan was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its Child Protection Act was fully consistent with that instrument. However, Azerbaijan's difficulties as a State in transition meant that many social goals, including goals relating to children, had yet to be met.

16. Her delegation fully supported Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) as an important instrument for protecting the interests of children affected by armed conflicts. Children suffered worst in such conflicts, as Azerbaijanis knew: as a result of the armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, 20 per cent of Azerbaijan's territory had been occupied and the country was now host to a million refugees and displaced persons, most of them women and children. They were living in makeshift accommodation, in abject conditions. They needed a peaceful resolution of the conflict and the chance to return to their homes. Meanwhile, their physical survival and the preservation of their faith in a better future depended on humanitarian assistance. In that respect, her delegation was deeply grateful for the help provided by the United Nations

system and a variety of international and non-governmental organizations. Particular thanks were due to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its Executive Director for their programmes in the spheres of child health, including immunization and nutrition, and school attendance.

17. As children were the future, it was inevitable to ask what children's well-being entailed on the eve of a new millennium. For Azerbaijan there was only one answer: an end to war, the promotion of good-neighbourly relations and the strengthening of the economy, public health and education.

18. **Ms. Al-Moosa** (Oman) said that women and children were the main victims of the growing gulf between peoples created by globalization and the debt burden. Oman had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1996, and shortly thereafter had established the National Council for the Protection of Children, which was responsible for implementing the policies formulated pursuant to the Convention. The report submitted by her country to the Committee on the Rights of the Child earlier in 1999 had made it clear that Oman was honouring all its relevant undertakings. That had also been acknowledged in the UNICEF *State of the World's Children* report.

19. The Government had been particularly active in providing basic health-care services and had dramatically reduced child-mortality rates. Increased levels of education and health awareness and a range of social-development programmes had also played a part in bringing about that reduction. Her country remained determined to continue to build on that success and overcome the challenges it faced. Children were and always would be at the heart of the comprehensive development policy aimed at raising standards of living in Oman, and achieving sustainable development.

20. **Ms. Russell** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that despite international efforts to recognize the rights of children, there was no guarantee that children would be born into a favourable environment: half the world's poor were children. Long before the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, CARICOM countries had placed important emphasis on education. An organization known as Service Volunteer for All (SERVOL), headquartered in Trinidad, had developed a special approach to early childhood education, which had been used as a model throughout the Caribbean, with funds for training and materials provided by UNICEF.

21. More recently, all CARICOM Governments had determined that education was a top priority for development and progress: several provided free education at all levels and several spent large portions of their budgets on education. That interest in education had led to the creation of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programme, a regional life-skills programme designed to foster well-being and a healthy social and family life. Coordinated by the UNICEF Caribbean Area Office in Barbados and partly funded by UNICEF, the programme targeted vulnerable social groups, especially youth. HFLE was conducting a Caribbean-wide survey on adolescent health, knowledge, perceptions and practices, and reports on the first group of countries surveyed — Jamaica, Dominica, Antigua and Grenada — had already been disseminated. The results of surveys in other Caribbean countries would also soon be published.

22. The Caribbean Community was pleased to note that the *State of the World's Children* had indicated that the region enjoyed a higher school-enrolment rate than any other in the developing world, at all educational levels, and that girls participated as much as or more than boys. All the Caribbean countries had signed and ratified the Convention, and had instituted mechanisms to monitor its implementation. Throughout the region, child-care boards had traditionally monitored the welfare of children. But recently other organizations had joined in that effort. A confidential children's hotline had been set up in Jamaica that encouraged children to call for counselling, information or conversation; in Barbados a non-governmental organization known as PAREDOS served as a watchdog for children's rights. Child-abuse workshops had been held throughout the region.

23. HIV/AIDS remained a threat to children throughout the world, with ravaging effects that were difficult to measure. The high percentage of AIDS among teenage girls, including in the Caribbean, highlighted the importance of education: a review conducted by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) had found that education helped to prevent sexual transmission in adolescents.

24. CARICOM applauded the International Labour Organization (ILO) for its worldwide campaign to promote the new Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999 (No. 182), and welcomed the global programme undertaken by UNICEF, ILO and the World Bank to provide second-chance education to groups at risk.

25. It was dismayed by the harmful effects of armed conflict on children and supported efforts to combat the problem of child soldiers, including the drafting of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the

Child that would raise to 18 the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces. CARICOM welcomed efforts to revive awareness of the problem of the availability of small arms, which had complicated the drug trade in the Caribbean, with devastating consequences.

26. The CARICOM States were deeply concerned about the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and had been alarmed to learn, from the seminar on sexual violence and exploitation of children in Latin America and the Caribbean held at Montevideo in March 1999, that thousands of children in the region had been victims of diverse forms of sexual exploitation. The declaration that had emerged from that forum recognized the need for public information campaigns and the integration of sex-education programmes into the social system. Awareness programmes of that kind had already been developed in some of the CARICOM countries in connection with AIDS-prevention efforts.

27. CARICOM countries remained concerned about the survival of children; while the advocacy of children's rights was a worthy task, the challenge was to put words into action.

28. **Ms. Kapalata** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention was shadowed by frustration for most countries of the developing world. Tanzania's two gravest setbacks in implementing the goals of the World Summit for Children had been poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which had undermined any modest gains that might have been registered. Exacerbated by the excruciatingly heavy external debt, poverty had affected social services, most of which focused on children. Tanzania's national programme for action to implement the goals of the Summit had included reducing infant and child mortality and malnutrition, and increasing access to education, health services, shelter and potable water. Progress over the past 10 years had been much slower than hoped.

29. The HIV/AIDS pandemic had threatened the survival of many children and orphaned many more. The fact that more than 11 million Africans, a quarter of them children, had died of AIDS should spur the international community to action. In that regard, her Government commended UNICEF on its proposed project for the prevention of mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmission in Tanzania. The protection and promotion of the rights of children in the country were directly linked to the resolution of those two basic problems.

30. It was unacceptable that children should still be used as targets and instruments of war; in that regard, the United Republic of Tanzania supported the recommendation of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to make the protection of children a central concern in post-conflict programmes. It agreed, above all, that conflicts should be prevented before they occurred, or resolved before they assumed destructive proportions; and urged scrupulous adherence to Security Council resolution 1261 (1999), which called for special measures to protect children in situations of armed conflict. In addition, her delegation urged unqualified support for the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and hoped he would be given the requisite resources to fulfill his mandate.

31. The new millennium should be met with new commitments and strategies, and an understanding of the importance of partnership and international cooperation in protecting women and children and implementing the goals of the Convention.

32. **Ms. Farhadi** (Afghanistan) observed that, despite the near-universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children's rights, particularly their right to grow up in peace and happiness, were systematically violated in many parts of the world. In developing countries, especially, children lived in intolerable conditions. Cooperation between Governments, international agencies, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations in promoting and protecting children's rights was imperative.

33. As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Afghanistan reaffirmed the central place of the family in society. Children must be brought up in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, a spirit of peace, tolerance and equality, not the spirit of fundamentalism and intolerance upheld in Afghanistan, with foreign support, by the Taliban.

34. The international community knew that Afghanistan was the victim of an undeclared war fomented by its southern neighbour in an attempt to install a puppet regime. In that war, children, whether as combatants or non-combatants, suffered physical and mental trauma. Only recently, on 20 October, an article in *The Guardian* newspaper in the United Kingdom had reported the plight of child survivors of a summer offensive by the Taliban to the north of Kabul. According to the United Nations Information Centre in Islamabad, young non-Afghan students, some no more than 14 years old, in religious schools in Pakistan were recruited for service in the Taliban forces in Afghanistan. On 22 October, the President of the Security Council had referred, in the fourth paragraph of his

note S/PRST/1999/29, to the Council's deep distress over the Taliban's use of such young people as soldiers.

35. There could be no military outcome to the crisis in the country: the foreign troops and alleged volunteers must leave and there must be negotiations under United Nations auspices for a peaceful settlement. The Taliban, however, refused to negotiate. She appealed to the international community to put pressure on them to forego their expansionist aims and to allow Afghanistan's people and children to exercise their right to live in peace and harmony.

36. **Mr. Yusoff** (Malaysia) said that Malaysia's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its socio-economic policies and plans showed the country's strong interest in children's well-being and the protection of their rights. Malaysia believed that a strong family constituted the most important guarantee of children's welfare and had, in 1991, initiated a family-development programme that provided families with information on matters such as health — including AIDS-related information — parenting skills and the development of the human potential. Naturally, such programmes needed to be backed up by action to address such problems as poverty and unemployment.

37. Malaysia had criminalized the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The misuse of the Internet for such purposes must be halted forthwith: more Internet service providers must comply with the legislation or strengthen their self-regulatory measures in that respect. Deeply concerned that increasing numbers of children were being trafficked, whether for commercial sex or forced labour, Malaysia called on Member States to augment their cooperation to counter that scourge. It was willing to expand its own activities with other countries and international organizations in that regard and would continue to punish traffickers through both criminal and civil measures.

38. Children were the most vulnerable persons in armed conflicts and their special needs regarding physical and psychological recovery and reintegration into society must be duly considered. There should be better coordination between international organizations in protecting children affected by such conflicts. Priority should be given to tracing families for reunification. All States should refrain from recruiting children under the age of 18 into their armed forces.

39. His delegation agreed with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography that the justice system, education and the media were the three catalysts for child protection. It also agreed with the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict about the urgent need for an "era of application" to translate international instruments into deeds.

40. **Ms. Arnon** (Israel) said Israeli public opinion had been a major factor for wider official and popular recognition of children's rights in the country. Penalties for sexual offences against minors had been made more severe and there had been judicial recognition of children's rights to human dignity, expression of their own opinions and freedom from use of punishment as an educational measure. In 1997, the Minister of Justice had appointed a Committee on Children and the Law to evaluate Israeli law for consistency with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and with other universal and local principles.

41. Non-governmental organizations pursued a wide range of activities concerning children's rights. The leading such organization was the National Council for the Child: it had prompted adoption by the Knesset of the Declaration of Children's Rights following Israel's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the establishment in 1990 of the office of Ombudsman for Children and Youth. Since April 1998 a Children's Rights Mobile Unit had been touring the country teaching children about their own and others' rights through interactive games and displays. The Council maintained links with UNICEF, the Children's Rights Information Network and other relevant international groups. Another prominent non-governmental organization, the Organization for the Protection of the Child, focused on children at risk within the home. For example, it operated an emergency shelter for children and provided treatment and legal advice in cases of child abuse.

42. Her delegation shared many of the concerns expressed by the Special Rapporteur and the Secretary-General's Special Representative in their reports (A/54/411 and A/54/430 respectively). It was also grateful for the work of UNICEF as reflected in the Executive Director's statements to the Third Committee and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Israel had put the subject of children on its international-cooperation agenda and could offer to other countries the benefits of its unique programmes in the early childhood domain. In its view, protecting children's rights was not only morally justified but was also an investment in the future.

43. **Mr. Bocalandro** (Argentina) said that his delegation subscribed to the statement made by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group. Argentina had incorporated the Convention on the Rights of the Child into its Constitution. The near-universal ratification of the Convention and the United Nations action in the fields of

development, humanitarian aid and peace and international security showed that the international community was firmly resolved to protect children's rights. Actors of fundamental importance, such as UNICEF, continually proposed helpful innovations such as the rights-based approach, and Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) was, as the Special Representative had described it, a major landmark. The Council would henceforth be able to bring all its weight to bear in protecting children in armed conflicts.

44. The legal instruments governing children's participation in armed conflicts needed to be improved. For example, conclusion of the negotiations on the draft optional protocol to make 18 the minimum age of recruitment was urgent. In that respect, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to set a minimum age for participation in United Nations forces. His delegation supported the Special Representative's call for an "era of application" for international norms, as well as his other proposals for action. It congratulated the Special Representative as well as UNICEF and the other agencies concerned on their outstanding work. It also wished to pay tribute to the many people from governmental and non-governmental organizations who had given their lives for the cause of children.

45. Throughout most of the world, children's development was hampered by poverty and inadequate access to basic services, especially health and education. The international economic system must find a means of ensuring that the family and schools could play their central role in overcoming children's problems.

46. **Mr. Botnaru** (Republic of Moldova) commended the United Nations on its system-wide efforts to promote and protect children, and expressed support, *inter alia*, for the drafting of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Republic of Moldova was seeking to protect the vulnerable sectors of society from the impact of economic transition, and had accordingly developed a comprehensive national agenda for the protection of children. In the eastern part of the country, the separatist regime continued, however, to violate the human rights of the population, including the rights of the child. Some 35,000 children in that area had no possibility of being schooled in their mother tongue. Moreover, school-leavers were deprived of the right to obtain higher qualifications, having been taught according to a separatist curriculum which did not meet national education standards. The Government was nonetheless doing its best to improve that situation.

47. Under domestic law, children enjoyed the same rights as adults; a revision of legislation to further enhance children's rights was under way. Special protection was currently accorded to orphans. However, the combined effects of the transition and the international financial crisis had led to an increase in the number of homeless children and children not enrolled in school. With regard to disabled children, his Government was currently seeking funding to develop much-needed education programmes.

48. A number of programmes had already been initiated to improve the health and nutrition of children. The Republic of Moldova continued to rely on international and bilateral support to protect the future of children. It was grateful for the assistance of a number of agencies for socio-economic development and improvement of the conditions of children, including UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

49. **Mr. Sidibe** (Mali) said that Mali was promoting the rights of the child through sectoral programmes to reduce infant and maternal mortality, combat child malnutrition and illiteracy, ensure children's access to basic health services and provide adults with family-planning services.

50. Since Mali's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and as a result of the new social and political environment in the country, over 1,000 associations and non-governmental organizations had sprung up to help children and families, and the Convention itself had been translated into national languages and disseminated among local communities. Also, in 1997 the Government had set up institutions — including the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family, an inter-ministerial committee and a joint governmental/non-governmental committee — and had established policies and programmes to deal with problems specific to children, families and women. Also, the State was encouraging the establishment of associations to promote income-generating activities for poor families and was preparing to implement an anti-poverty programme.

51. Between 1993 and 1998, Mali had spent some 13 per cent of its budget on essential social services; the objective of the 20/20 initiative put forward at the World Summit for Social Development was therefore far from being achieved. However, the Government hoped that Mali, as a highly indebted poor country, would have its debt burden lightened before the end of 1999, enabling it to allocate more resources to such services.

52. The Government and its partners were combating intolerable forms of child labour, the transboundary

trafficking in children, and female genital mutilation. Over the next few years, social mobilization, education and training would be brought to bear on those problems. A children's parliament had been established to promote children's participation in promoting their rights.

53. A social-protection code and a child-welfare code were soon to come into force, while the Penal Code already protected children against any acts threatening their lives or survival: there were severe penalties for infanticide and child neglect. Other legislation, including the marriage and guardianship codes, was being reviewed to bring it up to date with developments in children's rights. The national plan for children's survival, development and protection should lead to a constant improvement in conditions. The vaccination and nutrition programmes had significantly improved child health. Mali's system for democratic accountability enabled all Malians to question government officials about any human-rights violations. Under that system, specific questions had been asked about non-legal adoptions and trafficking in children.

54. The Government was holding consultations with UNICEF and a number of other agencies and non-governmental organizations on the major issues involved in its policy of education for all. Particular attention was also being paid to child misfits and disabled children. Institutions were being set up for such children, and, with UNICEF support, there were programmes for the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation of disabled children.

55. Despite significant progress since 1990, the political will of States to improve child welfare and achieve the goals of the World Summit was often thwarted by resource shortages caused by the debt burden and the drop in official development assistance. He called attention to the role of solidarity and cooperation which United Nations institutions, non-governmental organizations and the international community should be playing in order to help the developing countries protect the rights of children, particularly in terms of access to education, the key to social development. Under the Convention, children had legitimate claims on society, which Mali supported. Indeed, if children were to be protected, all Conventions on children's and women's rights must be translated into reality.

56. **Mr. Al-Humaimidi** (Iraq) said that, despite the large number of countries that had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, millions of children all over the world were suffering the most extreme deprivation. Children were the primary victims of armed conflict, economic sanctions and economic exploitation. The international community therefore had an obligation to follow up implementation of the relevant international instruments, each of which had affirmed the right of the child to special protection. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had made commendable efforts to raise awareness of the suffering of children.

57. The Iraqi Government was doing its utmost to make available to children the health, educational and other requirements that would enable them to play a useful role in society. Before the imposition of sanctions, Iraq had had some of the highest nutritional standards in the region and almost universal health care. The collective punishment which those sanctions represented had reduced Iraq from a position of relative prosperity to one of absolute poverty. Children were the foremost victims, as was clear from the horrifying increases in child- and maternal-mortality rates. More than one quarter of all Iraqi children were malnourished and only 40 per cent of the population had access to a safe water supply. Nearly all schools needed extensive reconstruction work. The UNICEF report on the effects of sanctions in Iraq issued in August 1999 had made it clear that the death of more than half a million Iraqi children under the age of five could have been avoided had it not been for the sanctions. The mortality figures showed that an act of genocide was being committed against the children of Iraq.

58. The effect of the sanctions had been exacerbated by the allied forces' use, during their onslaught against Iraq in 1991, of depleted uranium, which has been implicated in the death of 50,000 Iraqi children in the following year from leukaemia and other types of cancer, from which the children of Iraq would continue to suffer for many generations, and was also responsible for a large number of birth defects. It was imperative that the international community should shoulder its responsibilities, lift the sanctions and assist in the decontamination of the environment polluted by depleted uranium.

59. In view of the important role played by the Special Representative in raising awareness amongst the international community of the extent of Iraqi children's suffering, his delegation wished to invite him to visit Iraq in order to get a first-hand impression of the disastrous consequences for children of the sanctions, which were, in effect, a form of genocide.

60. **Mr. Minoves-Triquell** (Andorra) said that all bodies, public and private, in Andorra had always considered the care of children to be a high-priority task, and therefore regretted the sometimes desperate situations which children faced in a so-called "global" world.

61. The situation of children involved in conflicts deserved special attention. The minimum age for recruitment should be 18; indeed, when Andorra had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it had expressed its disagreement with the age limit of 15. He commended the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for his report (A/54/430), and called on him to continue his work, particularly in finding ways to deal with situations of "imperfect peace". The figures of 2 million children killed and 6 million maimed in conflict situations over the past decade (ibid., para. 10) were a tremendous shock for Andorra, which had seen no war since the thirteenth century.

62. The Government of Andorra was helping to fund the exhibition on children and small arms currently on display at UNICEF Headquarters, which it hoped would be hosted by various countries during 2000 to raise awareness of the harm small arms were causing amongst the young. It also welcomed the fact that the Statute of the International Criminal Court referred to crimes against children as being particularly odious.

63. The United Nations must play a role in curbing the sale of children and their sexual exploitation. The report of the Special Rapporteur (A/54/411) showed that countries must be more active in combating that painful reality, which was often the result of the bad economic situation in many countries. He called for better coordination on the matter between United Nations bodies, followed by action plans with appropriate human and material resources.

64. He noted that UNICEF — which deserved full support from all countries in its task of protecting children — took the view that without an education for development that prepared people to respect human rights, there could be little progress. In that connection, the UNICEF Committee in Andorra had sent out various texts on human rights to Andorran children and young people, pursuant to article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

65. It was regrettable that the question of child labour was still a subject of debate in the Committee, and he wondered what kind of future it would be in which the prospects for young people were so different depending on where they came from. That being the case, the Government of Andorra welcomed the recently adopted ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention.

66. He expressed the hope that the good words and wishes which all delegations had expressed in the Committee would become a reality in the new century and that the contradictions which at times made the world such a difficult place to understand and accept would be resolved as a result.

67. **Mr. Akinsanya** (Nigeria) said that his country's institutional and legislative machinery was being improved to ensure effective implementation of the Convention throughout the country. The Convention had also been simplified and translated into three Nigerian languages, and the Ministry of Education had been advised to incorporate its provisions into the school curriculum. Moreover, non-governmental organizations had been encouraged to integrate children's concerns into their activities and were involved in setting up child-rights clubs in schools.

68. In response to the concern expressed by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography that Nigeria had become a transit country for the trafficking of children to Gabon (A/54/411, para. 34), his delegation wished to assure the Committee that the Nigerian Government had already taken a number of legislative and other measures to curb that "socio-economic malaise". Juvenile-justice administrators had been sensitized, and the Nigerian Immigration Service was on continuous alert. The Government was committed to fighting that vice by improving the economic well-being of its people; international assistance would be much appreciated. Nigeria also welcomed the adoption of the new ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention.

69. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should be commended on his efforts to ensure that child rights became a major concern on the Security Council's agenda. Tribute was also due to UNICEF for its leadership role in promoting the rights of the child in Africa and elsewhere; its focus on country capacity-building was particularly welcome.

70. In conclusion, Nigeria wished to associate itself with those delegations which had called for a ban on anti-personnel landmines. Children should have a right to play freely without fear of being maimed for life; their families should also have the right to freely cultivate their farms in order to feed their children. It was to be hoped that the international community, inspired by the vision of a better future for children, would seek to create a "child-friendly" world in the new millennium.

71. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) said that 10 years after the World Summit for Children, the rights of the child continued to be violated, with children affected by armed conflict, exposed to the worst forms of child labour or forced to live on the streets. It was to be hoped that yet another World Summit would not be required before the adult decision-makers of the world redoubled their efforts for children, with a view to creating a new world order based on respect for human rights. Individuals must also be made aware of the role they

could play in saving the world and its children — who, after all, would be the leaders of tomorrow. The aims of the World Summit were fully relevant today.

72. Despite an economic, political and social crisis which hampered implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, her Government had succeeded in increasing access to education. With the support of the private sector, it had also improved facilities for abandoned children. The economic crisis had, however, only exacerbated the situation of child domestic workers in Haiti who, according to UNICEF, numbered some 300,000. It had always been traditional for wealthy families to take on girl helpers from the countryside, giving them the benefits of urban life in a middle-class family. The arrangement, indeed, used to benefit both families. Nowadays, however, host families had barely enough to meet their own needs, let alone those of the child worker, who tended to be overworked and accorded little attention. The Government, for its part, had introduced legislation in order to combat child labour. Primary education, for example, was compulsory for all. Other measures included the introduction of school canteens throughout the country and the distribution of school uniforms to primary-school pupils. A number of schools had also been built or renovated.

73. **Ms. Lorling** (Singapore) stressed the importance of positive family values in supporting young people through childhood and adolescence, academic pressures and career problems. However, families required the support of the Government and community. Quality education was also essential and must be viewed as a long-term investment. Singapore's childcare programme aimed to ensure that quality centres were widely available. Working mothers and families on low incomes were also eligible for additional support. In the field of family violence and child abuse, group-therapy programmes were available for both perpetrators and victims. Training was also provided to staff involved in handling such cases. Singapore also possessed rehabilitation programmes for juvenile delinquents.

74. Violations of the rights of the child must, indeed, be tackled at the source. Her Government was committed to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and sought above all to implement preventive programmes to strengthen families and ensure the welfare of children.

75. **Mr. Bhatti** (Pakistan), welcoming the efforts of UNICEF to raise awareness of the situation of children, expressed his delegation's hope for an early adoption of both draft optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention also represented a significant development; however, it should not be used as an excuse for protectionist measures against affected countries. Since child labour did not exist in a vacuum, it was essential, at both the national and international levels, to address underlying socio-economic factors such as poverty.

76. Pakistan remained committed to implementing follow-up to the World Summit for Children and had established legal and institutional machinery to that end. The goal was to achieve universal primary education enrolment by the year 2003. The Government had also sought to prevent child labour through law enforcement and regular inspections. There had been some 6,000 prosecutions to date, with nearly 1,400 convictions. Moreover, the agreement signed between ILO, UNICEF and the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry to eliminate child labour in the soccer-ball-stitching industry represented an international success story.

77. **Ms. de Armas García** (Cuba) warned that, if countries did not assume their responsibilities for the present generation, their children would see only the "remnants" of modern civilization which, despite the efforts of the international community, was failing in the face of disease, malnutrition, infant mortality, armed conflicts, wars and indiscriminate bombings. In those conflicts, children were either armed or were threatened by sophisticated weaponry. Children were being sold or trafficked in, for prostitution or other purposes; there was physical and sexual abuse, child pornography and sex tourism; children's body organs were being sold; their labour was being exploited; and they had no future as they roamed the streets in which they lived in an environment of drugs and delinquency.

78. The promises and targets of the World Summit for Children had been eloquent and ambitious, but children could not survive or thrive on promises; political will was required if promises were to become realities; if the 130 million children in developing countries who were not in school and the 250 million children who worked, many of them trapped in dangerous situations in which their work was exploited, were to be helped; and if sanitation was to be provided for the 2,900 million people, half of them children, who risked disease and death without it. It was inconceivable that 32,000 children a day died from preventable diseases and from malnutrition.

79. The United Nations system had helped achieve some goals for children, with UNICEF leadership. In that connection, the Government and people of Cuba felt great grief at the death of Mr. Luis Zúñiga, UNICEF representative in Cuba, who had done so much for children there.

80. Pursuant to the commitments made at the World Summit for Children, Cuba had established a national programme of action for comprehensive child development and had mobilized all possible resources towards that end. In a large part of the world, however, the limitations were basically structural and required action beyond the scope of any one Government: it made no sense to aim for comprehensive development for children unless it took account of their social and material environment. Thus, in addition to national efforts there must be a new philosophy of international solidarity which would generate fresh resources to help developing countries implement their national plans for follow-up to the Summit.

81. She noted that, whereas in some countries Governments were focusing in the education area on ensuring that their students mastered computer technology, in most countries Governments could not even provide the notebooks and pencils needed for their primary schools.

82. She noted also that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had 191 States parties, more than any other United Nations convention. She called on the few States that had not yet ratified the Convention to do so for the tenth anniversary of its adoption. However, ratification alone was not enough: more decisive, far-reaching action was needed at both national and international levels.

83. She commended the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on his work, but found that his report (A/54/430) contained lacunae: it should have referred explicitly to the devastating effects on children of unilateral coercive measures. The Security Council, which was responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, was not the appropriate body to deal with children's rights. Nor should Council decisions prejudice extensive and thorough consideration of children's rights by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, the competent bodies under the Charter in social and humanitarian matters and human rights.

84. The Cuban Government had hoped for an exhaustive report on the pernicious practices of the sale of children, child prostitution and the use of children in pornography, but had been disappointed. She expressed the hope that the debate at the next session of the Commission on Human Rights would be based on a clearer identification of where the problems lay and how they could be tackled. Given that those problems persisted, the work of the Commission on Human Rights to develop two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was necessary, and Cuba would participate actively in it.

85. Cuba was proud that it spared no effort to care for children's lives, from the very moment of conception. Indeed, the commitments Cuba had made at the World Summit for Children were real targets for both Government and people. Cuba had the world's highest teacher/child ratio in its schools, and every Cuban child or young person had both a classroom to go to and a teacher to teach in it. Over the past 40 years, excellent doctors and paramedics had been trained and were caring for people's health both at home and abroad. Despite the difficulties under which it was forced to operate, infant mortality was down to 7.1 per thousand, and diphtheria, poliomyelitis, and other curable diseases had been eliminated. Also, all children had basic education.

86. Cuba's commitment to ensuring that not a single child died a preventable death and the huge effort of the Cuban health system to achieve that goal were widely recognized. However, some of Cuba's child-health indicators could be qualitatively better: Cuba had had to pay $30 million over and above market prices to procure the medicines and equipment needed for specialized treatment of children. Many of those medicines were produced by companies in the United States of America or using technologies from that country: Cuban children had no access to cutting-edge medical technologies created in the United States over the past 15 years. Indeed, the children of several generations of Cubans now had the right to ask the Third Committee to put at the top of its agenda the question of the United States Government's systematic violation of the right of Cuban children to comprehensive development through its economic, trade and financial blockade on Cuba.

87. **Mr. Hachani** (Tunisia) said that the reports before the Committee revealed that, despite concerted international action to improve the situation of children, it remained precarious in many parts of the world, notably Africa. International support for country capacity-building remained vital if children were to be protected from the worst forms of child labour; inter-agency efforts to that end had proved particularly welcome.

88. Tunisia, for its part, had sought to bring its policies and legislation into line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had established appropriate institutional machinery. As part of national efforts to create an enabling environment, a national day had been set aside for children, leisure facilities had been provided, and efforts made to incorporate the rights of the child into school curricula. His delegation was pleased to report a drop in child mortality, an increase in vaccination rates and the attainment of near-universal access to primary education. The Government had also reached out to Tunisian children in other countries by organizing trips to Tunisia and sending teachers abroad.

89. **Ms. Gligorova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) expressed her delegation's appreciation for United Nations activities in support of children. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the transition towards a market economy and the worsened economic situation had impaired the social and political rights of all citizens, including children. The Government had made children a priority, but relied on continued international assistance. Cooperation with UNICEF on child health, education and social protection had proved particularly successful.

90. The importance, also, of cooperation with civil society and the international community had been brought to the fore during the recent Kosovo crisis. Her Government — under very difficult circumstances — had provided shelter to more than 30,000 refugees, mostly women, children and the elderly, thanks to the help of UNHCR and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict must be commended for visiting the Republic of Macedonia in the midst of the crisis. His assessment of the impact on children of the situation had contributed to a more prompt and appropriate international response. Her delegation also strongly supported the ongoing work on the draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts.

91. The work of the Committee served to focus international attention on the future of the world's children. It was vital to address the root cause of violations of the rights of the child, namely poverty, and to ensure universal access to primary education and elimination of sexual and labour abuse. Only then might the conditions be created to enable children to have a happy childhood and to fully realize their potential.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.